

COMMISSION ACTION

NCPC File Nos. 1303 and 6152



WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS
REVISED PRELIMINARY SITE AND BUILDING PLANS FOR VISITOR AND SECURITY
IMPROVEMENTS – LODGE ADDITION

Between 14th and 17th Streets, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW and the Tidal Basin
Washington, DC

Submission by the National Park Service

May 1, 2003

Commission Action Requested by Applicant

Approval of revised preliminary site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. sec 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. sec 8722(b)(1)).

Commission Action

The Commission:

Approves the revised preliminary site and building plans for the pavilion scheme for an addition to the lodge and a skylight at the Washington Monument Grounds, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.42(73.10) 41166.

Requires that the final submission include:

- Refinement of the pavilion scheme that differentiates the side porch exit areas from the primary entrance, and delineates a transition area using, for example, a transparent material such as glass, at the side facades where the new addition will be joined to the existing historic building.
- Drawings showing details of all above-grade elements, including paths, retaining walls, plaza, skylight, and hatches and mechanical vents.
- Material samples for the above-grade elements for review by the Commission at the site if so requested.

- A landscape plan showing both planting and built features, including analysis of the current proposal in the context of changes to the historic landscape over time.
- Analysis of the qualities of affected National Register-listed historic properties and conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of all alterations proposed for the site.
- A Cultural Landscape Report for the Washington Monument Grounds.
- A Historic Structures Report for the lodge and addition.

Recommends that:

- The retaining wall proposed along the side and rear elevations (which is not required for security purposes) be lowered from 30 inches to 18 inches to allow for seating and easier pedestrian access to the Washington Monument Grounds.
- The skylight design be advanced so that its shape and size can be better integrated with the new design and configuration of the retaining walls and path surrounding the addition.

Deborah B. Young
Secretary to the National Capital Planning Commission

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

NCPC File No. 1303/6152



WASHINGTON MONUMENT GROUNDS
REVISED PRELIMINARY SITE AND BUILDING PLANS FOR VISITOR AND SECURITY
IMPROVEMENTS – LODGE ADDITION
Between 14th and 17th Streets, NW and Constitution Avenue, NW and the Tidal Basin
Washington, DC

Submission by the National Park Service

April 25, 2003

Abstract

The National Park Service (NPS) requests approval of Revised Preliminary Site and Building Plans for visitor and security improvements at the Washington Monument Grounds. The Commission approved, at its January 9, 2003 meeting, the concept of an addition on the west façade of the lodge, but not the submitted design. The Commission also approved the preliminary site and building plans for the landscape plan, the retaining walls and paths, and the monument plaza. In addition, the Commission approved the Revised Development Concept Plan for the Washington Monument Grounds, which incorporated the use of the lodge as the entrance to the monument through a below-grade visitor facility and concourse. In response to the Commission's action in January, NPS has submitted two alternative designs for the addition to the monument lodge. They are referred to as the "conservatory" scheme and the "pavilion" scheme. The latter is NPS's preferred option. The skylight, also excepted from preliminary approval in January because its design was interrelated with the addition's, has been resubmitted.

Proposed paths and retaining walls immediately around the lodge are also suggested on the site plans and have been commented on in this report, but they are not part of this submission. They will be included in the landscape plan in a future submission to the Commission.

Commission Action Requested by the Applicant

Approval of revised preliminary site and building plans pursuant to 40 U.S.C. sec 8722(d) and Section 5 of the National Capital Planning Act (40 U.S.C. sec 8722(b)(1)))

Executive Director's Recommendation

The Commission:

Approves the revised preliminary site and building plans for the pavilion scheme for an addition to the lodge and a skylight at the Washington Monument Grounds, as shown on NCPC Map File No. 1.42(73.10) 41166.

Requires that the final submission include:

- Refinement of the pavilion scheme that differentiates the side porch exit areas from the primary entrance, and delineates a transition area using, for example, a transparent material such as glass, at the side facades where the new addition will be joined to the existing historic building.
- Drawings showing details of all above-grade elements, including paths, retaining walls, plaza, skylight, and hatches and mechanical vents.
- Material samples for the above-grade elements for review by the Commission at the site if so requested.
- A landscape plan showing both planting and built features, including analysis of the current proposal in the context of changes to the historic landscape over time.
- Analysis of the qualities of affected National Register-listed historic properties and conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation of all alterations proposed for the site.
- A Cultural Landscape Report for the Washington Monument Grounds.
- A Historic Structures Report for the lodge and addition.

Recommends that:

- The retaining wall proposed along the side and rear elevations (which is not required for security purposes) be lowered from 30 inches to 18 inches to allow for seating and easier pedestrian access to the Washington Monument Grounds.
- The skylight design be advanced so that its shape and size can be better integrated with the new design and configuration of the retaining walls and path surrounding the addition.

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BACKGROUND AND STAFF EVALUATION

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The submission includes two design alternatives for the lodge addition, a “conservatory” scheme and a “pavilion” scheme, which is NPS’s preferred option. Each scheme is similar in plan to what the Commission reviewed for the January submission. Each has the same overall dimensions, which are reduced from 62 feet in length and 51 feet in width to 55 feet in length and 43 feet in width. Neither is wider or higher than the existing building.

Conservatory Scheme

Footprint:	Two distinct segments, one for screening function and one for stair atrium
Dimensions:	Addition is 55 feet long by 43 feet wide; contains 1,972 square feet (historic lodge is 24 feet by 43 feet; contains 1,268 square feet)
Style:	Derived from nineteenth-century botanical conservatories
Materials:	Glass and steel structure for the walls and roof; granite water table
Skylight:	Trapezoidal footprint, measuring 60 feet long and 12 feet and 7 feet wide (same as in January submission), on an 8-inch to 12-inch granite curb
Retaining Walls:	Paths and 30-inch-high retaining walls extend as far back along the sides of the addition as the screening area

Pavilion Scheme (NPS’ Preferred Option)

Footprint:	A gradually stepped footprint with a hemicycle at the west elevation, for screening function and stair atrium
Dimensions:	Addition is 55 feet long by 43 feet wide; contains 1,866 square feet (historic lodge is 24 feet by 43 feet; contains 1,268 square feet)
Style:	Derived from eighteenth-century, neoclassical-style orangerie
Materials:	Large, mullioned windows; marble pilasters, columns, and cornice; granite water table; glass roof with structural glass mullions
Skylight:	Trapezoidal in footprint, measuring 60 feet long and 12 feet and 7 feet wide (same as in January submission) on 8-inch to 12-inch granite curb
Retaining Walls:	Continuous path and 30-inch-high retaining wall extending around the hemicycle of the addition

PREVIOUS COMMISSION ACTION

At its January 9, 2003 meeting, the Commission approved the concept of an addition on the rear of the lodge “of a size sufficient to meet the National Park Service’s needs without overwhelming the lodge” and suggested that “NPS provide two or more alternative designs” for the lodge addition. Further, the Commission approved the Revised Development Concept Plan; and reaffirmed its approval of the concept of the underground visitor facility and concourse to the monument. It also approved the preliminary site and building plans for the landscape plan,

the retaining walls and paths around the monument, and the monument plaza. The Commission Action of the January 9, 2003 meeting is attached.

The Commission approved the design concept at its February 2002 and April 2002 meetings.

EVALUATION

The submission responds to the Commission's action and to its direction to the applicant at the January 2003 meeting. The revised designs, in both alternatives, reflect a refined and efficient program that is more compact and includes a simplified stair. Each addition is no wider than the lodge, has been reduced in length by almost seven feet, and is no taller than the lodge's cornice. Each is more compatible with the size and the scale of the lodge. Each has historical design precedents appropriate to a small building in an open landscape.

Conservatory Scheme

Staff believes that the conservatory scheme is an acceptable alternative, but that the segmented form and massing is less successful than the pavilion scheme.

The conservatory scheme reflects the form and materials of nineteenth-century greenhouses and botanical gardens, as well as other utilitarian public buildings of the period of the monument and lodge. It provides a contrast to the rusticated marble ashlar of the lodge, although the use of steel conveys strength as much as its glass conveys transparency. The steel structure itself provides the articulation above the level of the granite water table. The two exit doors are lightly emphasized by pointed steel arches. The cornice is minimally marked by horizontal steel members.

The transparency of the proposed addition enables the lodge to be perceived as the principal structure, with the addition ancillary to it. Stylistically, this effectively distinguishes the addition from the solid masonry of the lodge and improves the visibility of the three-sided bay. However, the addition is composed of two distinct masses, with the screening function forming a narrow bar that connects the existing building to the atrium portion of the addition, which is similar in size and shape to the existing building. Staff finds that this results in the scheme overall appearing as three distinct masses, rather than as a single, new structure explicitly joined to and differentiated from an existing one, which staff believes would be a more compatible solution, given the historic prominence of the existing building.

The Pavilion Scheme

The pavilion scheme is NPS's preferred option and the alternative recommended by staff.

The pavilion scheme is derived from late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century orangeries, which were masonry garden buildings that allowed sunlight through large expanses of glass windows. They generally preceded the development of the glass and steel greenhouse in the mid-nineteenth century, and were predominately neoclassical in style.

The scheme reflects the neoclassical style of the four architectural termini of the Mall axes. The addition is articulated in the Tuscan order, which is the simplest of the classical orders. It is derived from marble columns, pilasters, and cornice. The large windows are mullioned. If possible, the mullions will be made of structural glass; if not, they will be formed of extruded aluminum. The two exit doors are highly defined by fully round, detached, marble columns. The roof of the addition is glass, with structural glass mullions to enhance its transparency.

The hemicycle form minimizes the physical presence of the addition when seen from the monument. The orangerie prototype allows the addition to be as transparent as possible, while both asserting neoclassical-style materials and form and responding to the masonry weightiness of the lodge.

The small lodge will gain prominence through its restored entrance function, its restored historic fabric and character, and through its increase in size as a result of the addition. This small building, however utilitarian in purpose, is on the east-west axis of the Mall and must be compatible in its hierarchy and materials.

Staff recommends that the columns and porch around the side exit doors of the addition be refined and simplified, so that these exits are differentiated from the primary entrance on the front of the existing building. Two-foot diameter Doric columns flank the existing, primary lodge entrance. Each side exit on the new addition is designed as a porch with four columns that includes two, 18-inch round columns at each set of exit doors. Staff finds that the side exits appear too prominent as currently shown on the facades and in comparison to the existing entrance. Staff recommends that the porch feature be re-examined, and that the columns at the side exit doors be modified, for example, to appear as either half-round or square pilasters.

Additionally, staff recommends delineating a transition of material in the area on the side facades where the stone edge of the existing historic building will be joined to the new marble of the addition. The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation emphasizes differentiating a new addition from the historic building. The standard can be applied here to preserve the legibility of the lodge corners by keeping them physically unaltered and as visible as possible, to enhance the differentiation between the existing and new structures. Staff recommends the use of a transparent material, such as glass, to allow each building component to be expressed.

Related Recommendations

Staff has raised several general concerns about the skylight during the past year, including its size, shape, relationship to the lodge, and impacts to pedestrian access to the grounds. The skylight was first introduced in the competition entry, at a time when an addition to the lodge was not under consideration. The Commission's concept approval at the February 2002 meeting included a skylight on the grounds. The applicant has not advanced the skylight design since that time. However, in the January 2003 preliminary submission (from which the approval of the skylight was excepted because its design was considered to be interrelated with the addition's), the dimensions of the glass surface of the skylight were reduced from 70 feet to 60

feet in length and from 30 feet to seven feet and 12 feet in width. Also, the mechanical vents, which originally added another 20 feet in length to the skylight, were moved away from the skylight to the areas beside the lodge. **Staff recommends that the skylight design now be advanced so that its shape and size can be better integrated with the new design and configuration of the retaining wall and path surrounding the addition.**

Staff is also concerned about the restriction of general, undirected access around the grounds, especially in relation to the retaining wall around the rear façade of the lodge addition. Although NPS has stated that the configuration of the 30-inch-high, vehicle-barrier retaining walls on the monument grounds (the Olin landscape plan) is intended in part to direct visitors to the paths leading to the monument, staff finds significant value in enabling visitors to move freely around the grounds. In particular, staff believes that the informal openness of the greensward is a character of the monument grounds to be retained. The proposed design of the path and retaining wall around the lodge addition places the addition appropriately in the landscape, but the consequence of enclosing the area behind the addition with a 30-inch-high retaining wall is that visitors are prohibited from moving freely along the east-west axis of the grounds from the lodge to the monument.

The retaining wall that is shown around the lodge addition is a suggested continuation of the system of retaining walls that will serve as vehicle barriers in the Olin landscape plan. As reviewed by the Commission at its January 2003 meeting, the system of retaining walls for the monument grounds would terminate at the north and south elevations of the lodge. As suggested in the current plans, the wall would continue around the sides and rear of the lodge addition. This wall does not appear to be necessary as a vehicle barrier, since it has not been shown on the landscape plans previously. The alternative conservatory scheme, for example, does not include an encircling retaining wall.

The retaining wall scheme around the lodge addition is not before the Commission this month. It will be shown in a future submission as part of the landscape plan from the office of Laurie Olin. NPS has asked the Commission to comment on it this month, if it chooses, as it relates to the lodge addition. **Although the retaining wall is not before the Commission at this meeting, as a related recommendation, staff advises lowering the retaining wall proposed along the side and rear elevations from 30 inches to 18 inches to allow for seating and easier access to the monument grounds.**

COORDINATION

Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee reviewed this item at its meeting on June 12, 2002. NPS's submission for preliminary site and building plan submission that month included an addition to the lodge to be used as the entrance to the below-grade visitors facility, and a skylight. The Coordinating Committee forwarded the proposal to the Commission with the statement that the project had been coordinated with all agencies participating. The participating agencies were NCPC, the District of Columbia Office of Planning, the D.C. Department of Housing and

Community Development, the D.C. Department of Transportation, the General Services Administration, the National Park Service, and the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority.

Commission of Fine Arts

The project as currently proposed has not been submitted to CFA. CFA last reviewed, in September 2002, a design proposal for a lodge addition and skylight combined in one structure that was not accepted by CFA and that was not presented to the Commission.

CONFORMANCE

Comprehensive Plan

The proposal is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan of the Nation's Capital. As the Washington Monument Grounds are part of the Mall Complex, an applicable policy in the Parks Open Space and Natural Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan specifies:

The great cross-axes of the Mall Complex, from the Capitol to the Lincoln Memorial and from the White House to the Jefferson Memorial, are a unique national space—they are a summary of democratic ideals and achievement that must be protected from inappropriate development. The Mall should be considered complete, and any improvements necessary in this area should be limited in scope and sensitively designed to reinforce the integrity of the Mall Complex.

The proposed security improvements would also include changes to the existing Monument Lodge in order to accommodate visitors and provide access to the below-grade visitors center and the concourse to the Washington Monument. An additional policy in the Preservation and Historic Features Element of the Comprehensive Plan applicable to the proposal states:

New Construction on Historic landmarks or in Historic Districts should be compatible with the historical architectural character and cultural heritage of the landmark or district. In design, height, proportion, mass, configuration, building materials, texture, color and location, new construction should complement these valuable features of the landmark or district, particularly features in the immediate vicinity to which the new construction will be visually related.

National Environmental Policy Act

Pursuant to the regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the NPS prepared an Environmental Assessment for the proposed action of improving permanent security for the Washington Monument, which includes the Washington Monument Lodge. NPS completed a NEPA decision process culminating in a Finding of No Significant Impact on July 22, 2002.

NCPC staff analyzed, in conformance with the requirements of NEPA, the prepared Environmental Assessment (EA) completed by NPS. Staff recommended adoption of the EA and prepared a Finding of No Significant Impact in December 2002 based on the EA in accordance with the provisions of the NEPA regulations issued by the Council on Environmental Quality (40 CFR, 1500-1508).

All aspects of the Lodge submission and design are addressed by the NEPA process above, and fully comply with the Commission's review procedures.

National Historic Preservation Act

The completion of the Section 106 process under the terms of the Programmatic Agreement (PA) is required for final Commission approval. NPS should continue to provide information and consult with the parties of the PA as outlined below prior to the submission of final site and building plans to the Commission.

Pursuant to Stipulation #3 of the PA, a consultation meeting was held on April 16, 2003 to discuss the lodge addition alternatives and other matters. The parties who expressed a preference preferred the pavilion scheme to the conservatory scheme; parties also discussed possible refinements to the exits in the proposed pavilion addition. The desire for pedestrian access around the monument grounds other than by the proposed paths continues to be an expressed concern.

Consultation under the terms of the PA is still underway, as it frequently is at the preliminary stage of review by the Commission. NPS is required to provide further information and analysis about the proposed design and the historic site, about the effects of the proposal on the historic character of the historic property, and about the conformance of the project with the Secretary's Standards under the terms of the PA.

The PA describes the procedures for the historic preservation consultation, the requirements for the type of information to be disseminated, and the basis for the consultation, which is to take into account the National Register of Historic Places affected historic properties and apply the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation for conformance regarding all alterations proposed for the site, including the monument and its grounds, and adjacent historic properties.

The signatory agencies and the consulting parties have reviewed iterations of the proposal over the past year by commenting and suggesting possible alternatives to mitigate or avoid possible effects. These comments have been made during the consultation meetings established by the PA, and also in additional meetings, including some on site. Many of the consulting parties commented in writing on the Environmental Assessment.

Further and more detailed evaluation by NPS staff of research information as it becomes available will be crucial to advancing the consultation. This information is anticipated in the Cultural Landscape Report for the monument grounds, and in the Historic Structures Report, which will focus on the rehabilitation of the lodge and the physical and stylistic appropriateness of a lodge addition.